

STATE OF MONTANA PRIMARY SEAT BELT LAW FACT SHEET

COSTS:

- Traffic Crashes cost the Nation about \$230 billion each year in medical expense, lost productivity, property damage, and related costs.
 - Montana pays \$621 million of these costs.
 - That is \$688 for every resident of Montana, each year.
 - About 74 percent of that cost is paid by citizens not involved in the crashes.
- Crashes cost employers more than \$119 million annually in the State, and about \$290 per employee.
- The Safety Belt Performance Grants in Section 2005 of SAFETEA-LU would entitle the State to about \$4.9 million if it enacts a new primary seat belt law.

PRIMARY SEAT BELT LAWS:

- In States with primary seat belt laws, law enforcement officers may stop a vehicle and issue a citation when the officer observes an unbelted driver or passenger. Officers in States with secondary enforcement seat belt laws may only write a citation after the officer stops the vehicle or cites the offender for another infraction.
- In States with secondary enforcement provisions, more than half of the public 16 and older support primary enforcement of seat belt laws. In States with primary laws, support of primary enforcement stands even higher at 73 percent. (MVOSS 2007)
- NHTSA estimates that if Montana were to pass a primary belt law, seat belt usage could increase by approximately 8 percentage points.
- With a primary law, Montana will save an estimated 17 lives, 127 serious injuries, and \$34 million in costs each year. (Based on an 8.3 percentage point increase from the 2008 seat belt use rate.)

USAGE DATA:

- 20.7 percent of Montana's population—about 196,000 people—is still not buckling up.
- An estimated 72 lives were saved by seat belts in Montana in 2007, and 42 additional lives could have been saved with 100 percent seat belt use.

COMPARISON TO OTHER STATES:

| | Montana | Washington | Oregon |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------|
| Seat Belt Law | Secondary | Primary | Primary |
| 2008 Observed Use Rate | 79.3% | 96.5% | 96.3% |

FATALITY DATA:

- In 2007, 205 people died while riding in cars and light trucks in Montana. Of these, 71 percent died while not wearing their seat belts compared to 54 percent nationwide. (2007 FARS Data)
- Almost 95 percent (263/277) of the State's motor vehicle traffic fatalities occur in rural areas, and the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled is over 5.8 times higher in rural Montana than in urban areas. (2007 FARS Data)
- In 2007, 82 percent of nighttime fatalities in Montana were unrestrained compared to 58 percent of daytime fatalities. (2007 FARS Data)